



U.S. AIR FORCE

## This Week in USAF and PACAF History 22 – 28 Aug 2011



25 August 1909 The U.S. Army leased land at College Park, Maryland, for the **first Signal Corps airfield**. Pilot training began on 8 October 1909.

### Countdown to 7 December 1941.

In late August 1941, the airmen of the Hawaiian Air Force were in the midst of a two-month indoctrination as infantrymen. General Short, Commander of the Army's Hawaiian Department, based his decision to divert airmen to infantry training on a scenario in which the Hawaiian Air Force had been destroyed and the U.S. Pacific Fleet was away at sea. General Short's priority was a shore-based defense against invasion despite his primary mission to defend the Pacific Fleet in port against an air attack.

25 August 1943 Twelfth Air Force sent 140 P-38s from the 1FG and 82FG on the **first mass, low-level, long-range strafing raid in World War II**. Flying from Sicily, the P-38s flew tree-top level to attack airfields at Foggia, where they claimed 143 planes destroyed or damaged.

27 August 1945 B-29s of the Twentieth Air Force flew their **first supply-drop mission to Allied prisoners of war** at a camp near Peiping, China. When the war ended, it was estimated that evacuation of the prisoners would take 30 days. Due to starvation, disease and maltreatment, many lives would be saved by rapid supply of POW camps. In all, 154 camps with 63,500 prisoners in Japan, China, and Korea got food, medical supplies, and clothing. (At right, a camp with "P-W" and other markings on the roofs. POW camps were often located next to Allied bombing targets.)



28 August 1945 **FEAF arrives in Japan**. An advance team of communications specialists flew in to Atsugi Airfield, 16 miles southwest of Tokyo – the first American personnel to begin the occupation of Japan. Among the American personnel was **Colonel Gordon Blake**, former Base Operations officer in charge of Hickam Field who was on duty during the attack of 7 December 1941. Protected only by units of the Japanese Imperial Army, Col Blake and this stalwart band set up the control tower and communication equipment necessary for occupation forces to land. Two days later, the operation called Mission 75 began landing American occupation forces in Japan. A total of 1,336 C-54 flights airlifted the initial Air Transport Command detachment, the 11th Airborne Division, the 27th Infantry Division, and advanced headquarters echelons for General MacArthur, Eighth Army and Far East Air Forces. From 30 August to 12 September, Special Mission 75 ferried 39,928 occupation troops and 8,202 tons of supplies from a staging area in Okinawa to Japan. The mission used 259 C-54s and 360 B-24 bombers as cargo planes, and associated aircraft.





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25-29 August 1952 **Operation HAJJI BABA or MAGIC CARPET.** U.S. Air Force C-54s airlifted 3,763 Muslim pilgrims to Saudi Arabia for the Hajj (pilgrimage to Mecca). Mideast airlines had overbooked flights from Beirut to Saudi Arabia, stranding thousands of travelers in Beirut, Lebanon and other locations. The USAF airlift averted a disaster at Beirut Airport, enabled faithful Muslims to fulfill the Hajj, and helped restore America's standing in the Middle East after U.S. support for the establishment of Israel in 1948. The photo at left shows Muslim pilgrims aboard a C-54. For more information, see the AFA article [The Pilgrim Airlift](#).

23 August 1958 **The Second Taiwan Strait Crisis.** Republic of China (ROC) forces on Quemoy Island were shelled and threatened with invasion by the Chinese Communists. PACAF asked for part of the TAC Composite Air Strike Force (CASF). On 29 August, all but two of the F-86Ds from 5AF's 16th FIS at Kadena flew to Tainan Air Base, Taiwan, and the JCS directed the 388th TFS, with 16 F-100s, to fly to Clark Air Base. President Eisenhower also authorized the delivery of the new Sidewinder air-to-air missile to the ROC F-86 Sabres,



giving them an advantage over their MiG opponents.

The invasion never took place and a ceasefire between the two Chinas was called on 6 Oct 1958. The CASF eventually returned to the United States. The photo above shows an F-104 at Tao Yuan Air Base, Taiwan, in September, 1958. At left, an F-86D at the National Museum of the USAF.



26 August 1967 The North Vietnamese captured **Major George E. "Bud" Day**, USAF, after downing his F-100 Super Sabre. Severely wounded, he was taken to a prison camp for interrogation and torture. Despite his crippling injuries, Major Day escaped and evaded the enemy for two weeks. He had crossed the demilitarized zone and was within two miles of a Marine Corps base when he was shot and

recaptured. Back in prison and in poor health, he continued to resist his captors until he was released in 1973. For his bravery, he earned the **Medal of Honor**.





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28 August 1972 **Capt Richard S. “Steve” Ritchie**, with his backseater Capt Charles D. DeBellevue, shot down his fifth MiG-21 near Hanoi. This made Ritchie the **first USAF ace of the Vietnam War**. For this feat, Ritchie shared the 1972 Mackay Trophy with Captain Jeffrey S. Feinstein and Captain DeBellevue. (At right, Capts. Ritchie and DeBellevue in their F-4 cockpit.)



26 August 1976 Two groups of **women pilot candidates** began flight screening at Hondo Municipal Airport, prior to entering undergraduate pilot training at Williams AFB on 29 September. The 77-08 class included Capts Connie Engle, Mary Donahue, Kathy La Sauce, Susan Rogers, and Christine Schott; 1st Lts Sandra Scott and Victoria Crawford; and 2nd Lts. Mary Livingston, Carol Scherer and Kathleen Rambo. On 2 September 1977, the first class of women pilots graduated at Williams AFB.

26 August 1980 **Exercise PACIFIC CONSORT**. Held in Australia from 26 August to 11 September, this exercise was the **first deployment of the F-15/ E-3A team to the Southwest Pacific**. Exercises in Australia and New Zealand, like other Asia exercises, had been severely curtailed during the Southeast Asia war.

23 August 1985 Air Force Systems Command successfully conducted its **first “cold launch”** of an ICBM from an underground silo at Vandenberg AFB, CA. The cold-launch technique ejected the missile from the silo by gas pressure, and the propellant ignited after it became airborne. This technique caused less damage to the silo and reduced the time needed for another launch.

22 August 1990 President George H. W. Bush authorized a **90-day call-up** of 200,000 reservists for **Operation DESERT SHIELD**. Eventually, more than 20,000 USAF reservists and 12,000 Air National Guard personnel served in that operation and DESERT STORM.

25 August 1992 **Hurricane Andrew** smashed into southern Florida with sustained 140-mph winds, destroying Homestead AFB. The Air Force embarked on one of its largest domestic **humanitarian airlift** operations. By 28 October, Air Mobility Command, Air Force Reserve, and Air National Guard transports, augmented by airliners under contract, had delivered more than 21,000 tons of relief supplies and had transported more than 13,500 passengers.



26 August 1992 The United States launched **Operation SOUTHERN WATCH** to enforce United Nations sanctions against Iraq. USAF aircraft began patrolling a no-fly zone south of 32 degrees north latitude in southern Iraq to provide protection to Shiite Muslims living there and to discourage any renewed Iraqi military activity against Kuwait or Saudi Arabia.